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Oh mother, mother,
When will you come ?
The crow is tired with a-cawing.

But conditions improved with time; we grew older and less imaginative, and above all the tide of Burmese nationalist feeling which surged into being in about 1920 was at last beginning to seep through the convent walls.

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Even the nuns heard, in 1930, about Saya San who raised a rebellion in Tharawaddy district, and roused such fervour among a certain section of the population that about 2,000 rebel followers were killed—their bodies vulnerable to gunfire in spite of the charms they had tattooed on—before the Government succeeded in suppressing the rebellion. Although Saya San was a charlatan to those in authority, and his followers a band of unruly dacoits, his conviction that he was born to become the monarch of a newly resurrected Burmese kingdom fired the imagination of some nationalists. To them he was an intrepid spirit, his courage so keen and his body so hardy: *Kya ko Khalok, thitngok hnin hsu ko thinbyu :* The tiger his stubbing stone, tree stumps and bushes of thorns his smoothest mat. By the time the nuns had heard of Saya San I had another Burmese girl as a fellow boarder and class-mate. Grace Nee was a girl of great spirit and mental liveliness. Her father was also an a-so-ya min, and we derived great comfort and happiness from each other's presence. When the class-teacher scolded one of us, saying, "You Burmans nowadays are expecting us to kow-tow to you. Yes, this mad fellow Saya San. And you think that we must bow to you," then the other would bang desk and chair in sympathy and indignation. Our hearts would swell to bursting point, for though we knew little yet about nationalism or patriotism, we identified our country and our race with the persons of our parents, and we could hardly bear this constant humiliation of their name. We shrank from telling them about it, however. My father never knew how different our life at school was from the world at home, and my mother will learn of it for the first time when she reads this.

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What a glorious new world opened out before us when we went to the University. What splendour there was in the richness of Burmese dress, food, companions, religious celebration, music, dancing and wit. I only regret that I could not take full advantage of these years because family troubles tumbled around my ears just then, and when they had subsided I was forced into earnest study to win the best degree possible in order to comfort my mother. This was necessary because up till this time I had always disappointed my parents because I had preferred popularity among companions to concentration on studies. Rangoon

563 463 184 [262] within the past two or three decades. In almost every way, they form a village within the village. They are spatially clustered together, apart from the Burmese. Their living is earned by dairying; milk from their cattle and water buffaloes is sold in Rangoon, for cash, to Muslim restaurants. Since the Burmese do not consume milk, the Indian dairymen find no market for their product in the community. The only economic relationship between the two groups consists of some exchange of Burmese paddy stalk, when the harvest is over, for animal manure. The Indians use the paddy stalk as fodder for their animals, while the Burmese use animal manure to some extent for their not very fertile garden and rice lands.

563 571 556 The Indians being Hindus, the Burmese Buddhists, the two groups have no basis for common participation in religious or ceremonial life. Nor is there more than a negligible tendency towards intermarriage; our census showed two cases.

As shown by our figures on income, the Indians as a group are far more prosperous than the Burmese. Although the Burmese seem to realize this, they tend to phrase the matter not so much in terms of greater wealth of the Indians as in terms of how little the Indian spends of his income. To the average Burmese of the village, the Indian is something of a lesser breed who lives on next to nothing and so grows rich.

563 Throughout the course of research in Tadagale, an effort was made from time to time to study intergroup feelings and attitudes, but this was a subject on which informants who were quite ready to discuss almost any other matter were loath to speak. The Burmese seemed to know little (or at least so professed) about the ways of the Indians; the Indians were very tight-lipped concerning the Burmese.

175 ● 669 674 It was towards the close of our work in Tadagale that certain events occurred which brought out, in sharp focus, the nature of Burmese-Indian relations and attitudes, and completely broke the silence maintained earlier. At this point, however, some digression is necessary to provide a background for understanding what took place.

In 1949-50, the internal disturbances which have beset Burma since the end of World War II were at their height. During this time the maintenance of law and order sank to a very low point; robbery, armed and unarmed, was rampant. Tadagale was robbed three times within the preceding year, according to informants. On such occasions, bandits entered the village, fired their guns into the air to frighten the defenseless villagers, and then proceeded to tie up some villagers and remove their money and other valuables. Anyone who resisted was beaten. According to villagers, the police, located about half a mile away, could not be depended upon for protection or for action once a crime occurred, for the bandits were better organized and armed than the police, making the latter extremely reluctant to take any action.

674 563 175 Some early evidences of distrust between Indians and Burmese appeared about the middle of our research period, when an Indian dairyman stated that he was convinced that the bandits who periodically invaded Tadagale had Burmese collaborators in the village. He based his belief on the fact that the bandits seemed always to find their way directly to the homes of the more prosperous inhabitants, which knowledge, he claimed, could be gotten only from villagers.

14: Brant E-5 (1949-50) 1954 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4
Indians

621 consider, because they did not want to lose the Indians as customers for their paddy stalk and as a source of manure for their gardens and fields.

563 The headman of Tadagale, when queried as to the reasons for the departure of the Indians, shrugged his shoulders and said simply that they were afraid, despite the plans for village defense, that their animals might be injured in the event of any fighting between villagers and bandits.

Within a few days, the Indians of Tadagale had all departed; and in the vacant spaces where their houses had stood, the Burmese were eagerly at work erecting buildings of their own.

Social Change

175 631 622 626 Prior to effective British rule in Lower Burma (about 1830), the local autonomous unit was the village circle, consisting of several villages under the authority of a headman. The office of headman seems to have been hereditary in fact, although elections were held. That is to say, headmen tended to be elected in a particular lineage. Rule was through personal relationship between the headman and the villagers. Under the circle headman was a council of elders, appointed by him, one from each village in the circle. Disputes were almost entirely settled by arbitration and compromise, rather than with any concern over the abstract legal right and wrong of the case.

621 Within the village, a system called 'ten-house heads' was operative. This system appears to have been operative through British times, but at least since 1948 has lost effectiveness. Tadagale houses are strung out along a main path, and the ten-house division is such that the houses belonging to one group are mostly contiguous. The head of each ten-house section acted as a kind of deputy to the headman and sat on the council of elders.

175 631 622 With the coming of British rule, much of this changed. They established a hierarchical system, in which there were, in descending order of size, nation, division, district, township, village circle, and village. All officials at each level were appointed from the capital, even down to the village level, where the headman was made an appointed civil servant. He was paid on a percentage basis of his total tax collections and fines levied. The circle headman had police power and judicial authority in petty crimes.

175 692 A judicial system was introduced by the British to replace the old informal arbitration. With an almost total disregard for indigenous institutions and customs, the British established a territorial system based upon law. The loosely structed and informal system of old gradually broke down.

669 631 182 Early in 1948 Burma gained her independence. Since that time the country has been in a state of disorganization. The civil strife has brought about an almost complete breakdown of administrative function on many levels. Certainly the ties of the village with higher units have been curtailed. One indication of this is the fact that the headman no longer submits reports with any degree of regularity to higher echelons, as was required under British rule. Even the local ten-house heads council has largely ceased to function. It exists, but is scarcely used.

Home in Lovdis Road Refugee Camp

Since November 1949 U Myaing and his family have been living in the Lovdis Road refugee camp, Rangoon. They had stopped at half a dozen places prior to their present abode, but their living had been on very much the same scale. The refugee camp is located about a mile north of the Shwe Dagon Pagoda on a hilly promontory. The area is not far from Tiger Alley (U Wisara Road) and along this road and others nearby, huts have been built up within the last few years, largely by war refugees. The buildings of the camp were earlier used as headquarters and barracks by the People's Volunteer Organisation (P.V.O.). The P.V.O. is an offshoot of the Burmese Patriot's Army following the end of the Second World War. It was originally an army, but after independence was converted into an "organisation" for political purposes. A Yellow Band and a White Band section developed and the White P.V.O.s becoming insurgents.

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The vital statistics of the camp as given by U Khant, the school master are as follows:- 269 families comprised of 856 adults (LU GYI), 241 young people (LU LAT), and 33 infants (NO SO) live in 15 huts . The number of families in each hut ranges from 9 in the smallest to 36 in the largest. The infant category includes those babies who are still breast feeding - up to one year of age. The adult category begins at the age of voting - 18 years. The proportion of the three categories as shown in the totals remains fairly consistant for each of the houses indicating that there are no special age-grade habitations. The refugees come for the most part from the Delta area of Lower Burma, from the districts of Pantanaw and Bassein but they have not organised themselves in their huts according to the district or village from which they come. The assignment of space has been on a pragmatic base according to who arrived at what time. The buildings consisted for the most part of rectangular huts measuring 30 feet by 60 feet with woven split bamboo walls and thatched roofs. When the area was converted into a refugee camp, each family was assigned a certain space which they then partitioned off. A map of the refugee camp area shows a haphazard plan. The only

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quality of their sleep suffers to any appreciable extent. Americans who live in Rangoon suffer far more relatively from lack of "beauty rest" mattresses.

As far as the actual physical needs of the family go, the refugee camp situation does not seem to be far below an acceptable level. The Pathee house gave space far above that actually used for physical needs. The answer here would seem to be that social obligations in Pathee were much greater than here and the actual space fulfilled a real need there. Since such a demand is not present in the refugee camp, the lack of this space is not regarded as a privation. In general the refugee camp quarters are a compressed version of the Pathee quarters and do not represent any true innovations. The family has been able to contract the quantity and quality of their needs, but their nature has not been appreciably altered. The pattern of "Home" has not been shattered, but has been contracted and its quality somewhat changed.

The town of Pantanaw was recaptured from the insurgents early in the month of December 1950. U Myaing and his family are considering whether or not it would be advisable to return home. It seems that the government has offered to send back those who are willing to return. Government offers them, in addition to passage money, other things such as mosquito netting, or so U Myaing thinks. But they are also hesitant and afraid and would like to remain for some time longer in the peace and security of the refugee camp. However, when the country settles down and things return to normal, they would like to return. They prefer Pantanaw because they find it much easier to earn money there. Here they find it more difficult to find work - and it involves harder labour. Also, the prices here are very high in comparison.

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21: Htin Aung B-5 (ca. 1980) 1937 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

101 walked up and down the stage—a dramatic practice which was taken
536 from the Siamese and used on the Burmese stage. The language was
538 the language of the court, artificial, but not so removed from reality as to prevent it from being understood by the lowest classes. The play was mostly in verse. The prose was poetic and elegant except in comic scenes.

[175] When the Burmese conquered Siam in 1767, they were able to take the play back with them for various reasons. The play was to both nations a *Jataka* story. The manners and the language of the Siamese court, as depicted in the play, were similar in many ways to those of the Burmese court. The mythology was common to both nations. The play was easy of reproduction at the Burmese court because of the many characteristics common to both countries, and because the captive and exiled members of the Siamese nobility at the Burmese court were ready and willing to help not only because they were anxious to teach the new art to their conquerors, but also because they missed an entertainment to which they had been accustomed for generations.

3. The *Rama* Play at the Burmese Court

175 The age that followed the conquest of Siam in 1767 was one of
669 triumph. In 1752 the Burmese Empire had been destroyed by the
727 Talaings, and the conquerors were ruthlessly putting into practice their policy of stopping the continual war between Burmese and Talaing by exterminating the Burmese as a race. In the same year, however, a humble villager arose, rallied the Burmese around him, with the result that five years later the mighty Talaing Empire was destroyed and the Talaings as a race disappeared from Burma. The obscure villager became the great Alaungpaya, founder of the famous dynasty that bore his name. He tried to conquer Siam, but died when victory was in sight. His son, Hsinbyushin, carried on the war, and continued the extension of the Empire. Manipur was soon conquered, and in 1767 Siam was completely crushed and its capital destroyed. The Siamese court was taken captive to the Burmese capital. The weary army was given no rest, however, for the Chinese had invaded Burma. From 1765 to 1769, the Chinese carried on a serious campaign against Burma. There were four distinct invasions, but each was repulsed. In 1769, the Chinese defeat was complete. Of that age of triumph, Harvey says:

The victory [against the Chinese], coming as it did on top of a

Zl: Htin Aung E-5 (ca. 1930) 1937 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

generation of continual warfare which might well have exhausted the race, shows that the exploits of Alaungpaya were no mere flash in the pan, but were broad-based on the energy of the race as a whole. . . . The chronicles for the period are verbose and pompous, but it is impossible to read them without being struck with their fierce pride.[1]

It was during this age of triumph, after the Chinese invaders had been sent back defeated and people could breathe again without anxiety, that the Siamese *Rawa* was produced at the Burmese court for the first time.

The court of Ava, then the capital of Burma, was in many ways comparable to the court of Elizabeth after the victory over Spain. Glory and wealth and splendour surrounded the king and his courtiers. Masters in the arts of war, they were also masters in the arts of peace. Almost everyone was learned, and the ablest soldiers and statesmen were also the foremost poets. Queens and ladies-in-waiting vied with princes and lords in the study and practice of learning and literature. Experts in the study of Pali, Sanskrit, and Buddhistic lore, keen students of foreign institutions and literatures, they were essentially Burmese, and enriched their own language and literature with borrowings from all sources. The period 1770 to 1824, the date of the first British conquest, that period of triumph, may easily be termed the age of translations, so keen were the people for knowledge from all sources. Siamese romances, Pali *Jatakas*, Chinese histories, Siamese and Cambodian chronicles, a history of Portugal, a Sanskrit work on sexual science—this list made at random shows clearly the range and variety of the translations. The court led the people in the pursuit of learning and literature. The courtiers were learned, the king was a patron of learning, and at the court the captives and hostages numbered among them great scholars and poets from conquered States. After the toils of war, men turned towards learning for rest and recreation. Men gloried in their country and studied their own literature, history, and institutions, and that study naturally led to the study of those of other countries. Almost everyone studied and almost everyone wrote. The age of triumph was an age of learning.[2]

The Siamese court plays appealed to the imagination of the court. The Siamese captives longed for their native entertainment.

[1] *History of Burma*, p. 258.

[2] Some account of the learned atmosphere of the court and of its more famous translators and poets is given by G. E. Harvey, op. cit., pp. 249 and 250.

21: Htin Aung B-5 (ca. 1930) 1937 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

made. In about 1855 he wrote his first play, *Paduma*. In the next year the two brothers, the king and the prince, quarrelled, and when the misunderstanding had been explained, U Pon Nya was ordered to write a play to celebrate the occasion, and *The Water-seller* was composed and presented. As reward, the king appointed him chief court-poet and created him lord of Ywazi village. He would have been made a ruling chief or official had he not been born with a crippled arm, because a man born with any defect in his limbs could not become a member of the ruling class. U Pon Nya took part in various court intrigues. Most of his plays had some hidden meaning that concerned the court, and they played an important part in the plots and counter-plots to decide who was to be heir, for though Kanaung was officially the heir, the king's sons did not accept him.

In 1865 Myingun and Myingondaing, two of the king's sons, decided to make a bid for the throne. They consulted U Pon Nya as to the most suitable time as foretold by the stars, and the poet told them that the next day at noon was the luckiest time for the rebellion. This connivance in a rebellion against his king and his master, Prince Kanaung, was a very disloyal and ungrateful act, because the fiery temper of the two princes was well known, and it was plain from the beginning that the rebellious sons intended to put to death at once their own father, and their uncle, who also happened to be the father-in-law of Myingun. U Pon Nya defended himself later by saying that he was compelled to give his opinion as to the most suitable time, because he was threatened with certain death. But he did not inform the king of the plot when the princes had left after promising him the highest rank of nobility; and though he might have been threatened with death at the beginning, he seemed to have been well content with the promised reward and quietly left the capital that night. The next day at noon, the rebellion broke out. The courts of justice where the crown prince and the wisest in the land were sitting in session were attacked, and the palace raided. The king escaped, but the crown prince and his fellow-judges were killed. The rebellion was put down the same afternoon, but by then the flower of the court and the nobility had perished. The two rebels escaped, Myingondaing to die of fever at Rangoon, and Myingun to retirement in French Indo-China. U Pon Nya was arrested and tried on a charge of treason by the king himself, and though a sentence of death was clearly deserved,

21: Htin Aung E-5 (ca. 1930) 1937 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

536* 669 644 the king remembered the proclamation exempting the poet from punishment by death, and as he had a great admiration for the works of the dramatist, U Pon Nya was merely sent to the house of the governor of the city as a prisoner on parole. Unfortunately, the junior wives of the governor and the ladies at his court took too great an interest in the comfort of the prisoner, and the governor became extremely jealous. After three months of what he suspected to be romantic intrigues between his prisoner and his ladies, the governor decided to put U Pon Nya to death. So one night in 1866 the poet was secretly executed, and the body disposed of never to be discovered, under the orders of the governor. A few weeks after the secret execution, the king granted full pardon to U Pon Nya, believing him to be still alive. Only then was the truth discovered, and when the news was reported to the king, he said wearily: 'Alas, a dog has killed a man.'

2. *Paduma*

536* The story is taken without any modification from a *Jataka*. A king has seven sons, and he is warned by his ministers that the princes might rebel. In spite of his great love for his sons, the king has no choice but to exile them with their princesses. The seven princes and their consorts leave the capital, but soon lose their way in the forest. There is no food, and the younger princes beg their eldest brother, Paduma, to agree to their plan of killing and eating their princesses. Paduma tries to argue against the proposal, but realizes that his arguments are in vain, for the six brothers are maddened with hunger. He has no other way of escape but to flee with his consort. So before dawn Paduma and his princess run away from the others. The sun rises and the two are in great agony through the heat. They reach a stretch of sand, and Paduma is cheered because sand is usually found near a river. But the very sand which cheers Paduma increases the heat and burns the delicate feet of the princess. She can go no further and begs the prince to kill her; she would then be relieved from her agony, and he would have a better chance of saving himself alone. But the prince cheers her by encouraging words, and piercing his flesh with his sword, makes the princess drink the blood to quench her thirst. Then he puts her on his shoulder and continues the journey. Soon they reach a wide river, on whose banks grow fruit trees, and safety at last seems assured. As they rest, they hear a cry for help and see a man tied to a raft, floating helplessly down the river. The princess pities him,